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GERMAN FREEDOM

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If the war did nothing more than make us appreciate what liberties are enjoyed by democracies, it would not have been in vain. We have been taught to believe that Germany was the only place in which real freedom of speech and thought was permitted. We now know at what point such freedom is stopped and the point where public opinion and public action are effective. Beyond such a point men must think and speak as they may chance to be permitted. Dr. Luckenbill's article, drawn to so large an extent from his own experience, ought to help its readers see that real freedom of thought lies between speculation unverifiable by facts, and state control.

Even those whose acquaintance with German literature is by no means intimate will have little difficulty in recalling numerous passages giving glowing descriptions of or apostrophizing *die deutsche Freiheit*. On the other hand, to the average American tourist Germany is a land flowing with *Verboten!* and *Strengst verboten!* signs. Obviously, thinks he whose knowledge of Germany and the Germans has come through both of these channels—literature and travel—freedom is an ideal toward which the German people are pushing, not something which they are now enjoying. I thought so, and when a student in Germany I thought so “out loud.” The result was surprising and somewhat disconcerting, for I discovered that it is in the United States and not in Germany that freedom's wings are clipped. If *Verboten* and Germany are synonymous terms to the American, it is equally true that the two compounds “skyscraper” (*Wolkenkratzer*) and “blue laws” characterize the United States in the eyes of most Germans. Our dry legislation, Sunday closing laws, and other “puri-

tanical” attempts at violating the sanctity of “personal liberty” hold as prominent a place in German as in German-American discussion. “A free country! Ha! Ha! in which one is told what he may and may not drink!” Insist, as I did, that America is really a “land of liberty” and the educated German will give you a lecture on trusts and the lynching evil. Indeed this sort of talk has long since become stereotyped. Those who took time to read any of the pro-German pamphlets which were circulated in our country prior to our entrance into the great world-struggle may remember that the German virtues and German freedom were often set into bolder relief by contrasting them with some of the faults inherent in democracy, faults which we were urged not to overlook.

But if Germany and the Germans at peace were an enigma to us Americans, at war they have become the riddle of the ages. How can intelligent humans stand for the Kaiser, militarism, and the things to which these have led? The answers to this question are legion.

However, it seems to me that none is so wide of the mark as that which makes "higher criticism" the spring of our modern woes unnumbered. That terrible monster, we are to believe, has undermined faith in the Bible in Germany. Further search for the cause of the collapse of German morality and ethics is unnecessary. We may safely assume that those who have put forth this explanation are unacquainted with the church situation in Germany as well as with the obstacles encountered there by those who have attempted to disseminate the results of a scientific study of the Bible. The Kaiser's almost daily assurances to his people that God is marching at the side of the German armies do not point to an undermined faith in God and the Bible. The most orthodox, some of us would prefer to say reactionary, churches in America are the German bodies. The most vigorous arraignment of the higher critics that I have ever listened to was delivered from a German pulpit in this country. However, the history of biblical criticism and its struggle for a hearing in Germany have recently been discussed by Mr. Wallis in the *Biblical World* (July, pp. 41 f.), which means that my task has been considerably lightened. And that task as I have set it for myself is to point out the one great barrier in the way of liberal thinking, of freedom, in Germany, whether in religion, in education, or in politics. Since so much of what I shall have to say consists of things I saw and heard during a brief summer's residence as a student at the University of Berlin, a few "personal" remarks may not be out of place.

My paternal ancestors left the Rhineland and settled in America some fifty years before the Revolution. It may, therefore, be taken for granted that my visit to a German university was not due to any lingering loyalty to the Fatherland. I went to Germany, not from any sentimental reasons, but merely because it was the proper thing to do in preparation for a teaching career. As the result of a somewhat exceptional early training, I took with me a more intimate acquaintance with the German language and literature than most students bring back with them even after several years of residence abroad. "Mixing" with the Germans was a comparatively easy matter for me. My relations with the professors and students at the University of Berlin were far more pleasant than I had anticipated, far more pleasant, indeed, than I deserved in view of my frank criticisms of almost everything German. To say that I was not benefited by contact with some of the world's foremost authorities in biblical science, ancient languages, and history, would not only be ungrateful but untrue. But the German people, their schools and churches, in particular their politics, soon became my absorbing interest.

That the civil and university authorities should insist on knowing whether I was a Catholic, an Evangelical, or a Jew did not surprise me—they had asked so many other questions before they came to this. But that this should be about the first bit of personal information desired of me when I tried to open up an acquaintanceship with a German did puzzle me. Later I found out that politics and religion were very closely

related and that it was not an easy matter to be on intimate terms with a man until you had him classified as to these.

My landlady's husband was an interior decorator, a widely read and a most intelligent man; also a Social Democrat. I got to know this man rather intimately. With him I attended Catholic, Evangelical, and Jewish services. But politics and political meetings were his specialty. Through my acquaintance with this man and our perambulations I got more first-hand information as to the working of the German mind, the official mind in particular, than I could have gained from a dozen volumes. This man, like the large majority of Social Democrats, was quite sure that the church, more particularly the Prussian state church, was the instrument used by the aristocracy to keep the common herd in ignorance and subjection. I had previously found out that the payment of the taxes levied for the support of the state church was entirely voluntary, so I told my friend that I assumed that he made no free-will offerings to the church. "Yes, indeed, I do; it's advisable." I learned as time went on that the Germans do a great many things "voluntarily." Again a number of remarks I have read in the pro-German propaganda come to mind, but I pass these by in favor of an extract from a memorial presented to the State Department in Washington on January 20, 1917. The document is an answer to the protests which reached Berlin in the matter of the deportation of the Belgians. After pointing out that the British blockade is the cause of all of the suffering in Belgium, the paper goes on to say that

"before they [the ordinances of deportation] are applied the unemployed are given opportunity to enter of their own will into remunerative labor contracts, and coercive measures are resorted to only in cases of obstinate refusal." No doubt this sounds all right to the official German mind. To us it would be humorous if it were not so pathetic.

At first I was surprised at the freedom with which I could discuss matters of religion and politics with the Germans. Not even the subject of the Kaiser and his antics seemed taboo. Only after I had heard the story of *das Brandenburger Thor* and *der Brandenburger Thor* and a few others like it a dozen times from as many people did I discover that certain anecdotes, whose telling I was sure would bring the charge of lèse majesté, were quite *en règle*. Like the Ford stories in this country, they were apparently gracefully accepted as a tribute to an object whose sterling qualities are universally recognized. But when I tried to come to close quarters, to have an honest opinion expressed, invariably there came furtive glances and words to the effect that it was not advisable to continue the discussion. Two words, *die Obrigkeit* and *das Militär*, I heard pronounced with "bated breath" so many times that I cannot see or hear them now without having a "creepy" feeling. One goes so far and no farther in the discussion of the German government. Let me give an illustration.

My socialist friend took me to a political meeting. It was held under the auspices of the anti-Semitic party. As its name indicates, this party stands for the suppression of the Jews. The

speaker of the evening was Graf Pückler. The audience was seated in German fashion around tables where beer was served. Back of the speaker's table were three chairs, one for the orator, the others for the chairman and secretary of the meeting. But there was also a chair at each end of the table. My friend told me to watch the occupants of these chairs. They were policemen. The one to the speaker's left took notes which went to headquarters; the one to the right merely looked important. I was informed that he was a kind of umpire; that the meeting could not open until his helmet was removed and placed on the table, and that the meeting was over the moment that helmet was placed on his head. "Keep an eye on his hand," whispered my friend.

The address took away my breath. The picturesque language I had heard from the lips of Pennsylvania German farm hands and Berlin "cabbies" was mild in comparison with the speaker's. One sentence, on which my friend said the Graf had probably practiced some twenty or more years, contained more vulgar epithets than I imagined all of the German dialects could boast of. "Surely," thought I, when the first dozen of milder terms of opprobrium were followed by some of brighter hue, "the hand of the policeman will move toward the helmet." But nothing happened. Even if I remembered the whole of that long sentence, propriety and the postal laws would forbid its repetition here. It opened with *der kleine Jakob*, and ended with *Wanzen* (bed bugs). At the end the helmet still rested on the table. I strongly suspected that the umpire would have joined in the applause

had not his official position stood in the way.

The story that brought down the house, and also brought the hand down on the helmet, ran as follows: Some Jews over in Russia were having a picnic. In the evening they hired boats and were enjoying themselves on the river. They fell in with a boatload of drunken army officers who opened fire on them with their pistols. In the scramble some of the boats were upset and the occupants carried helpless downstream. A few managed to lay hold on the boat in which the officers were. But these took the oars "and cracked their skulls like nuts."

The last sentence was repeated over and over again by the speaker as a sort of refrain to the other episodes which were related. The speaker now left the Russian Jews and began talking about those in Germany. As he warmed up, I noticed the fingers of the umpire drumming on the table alongside the helmet. But the chairman of the meeting saw it before I did, and immediately laid hold of the right coat-tail of the speaker, who broke off his sentence in the middle and started on another tack. But he was soon on thin ice again (I hope I am not getting my figures mixed), and this time the aid of the secretary was called for. Vigorous attacks on both coat-tails were needed to bring the speaker to his senses; and the hand had almost reached the helmet. What finally brought the hand to the helmet and the helmet to the head were words to this effect: "Why do we continue to suffer at the hands of these miserable money-lenders? Is it not because our princes need money and are willing

to" But the sentence was not finished.

Not all German meetings and addresses are as exciting as this one was. What changes the war may have brought about I do not know, but Germany before the war was full of parties. Witness the anti-Semitic party whose one-plank platform called for the abolition of "little Jacob." Meetings were being held all the time. New York's east side soap-box oratory could not hold a candle to many of the speeches delivered at these meetings. Free speech in Germany? So I have been informed by pro-German propagandists in America, but my Social Democrat friend was not deceived. He told me it was perfectly safe to talk until you were blue in the face, that you might use all the words in your vocabulary; if you were an Evangelical you were free to wipe up the earth (figuratively) with the Jews and Catholics, and vice versa, but—*aber!*—when you got around to criticizing the Kaiser and the government the helmet adjourned the meeting. The Centrists (Catholics), said my friend, control just about half of the votes in the Reichstag and these are always cast *en bloc*. Over against this solid front stands a hopelessly divided opposition. I haven't time to discuss this point, but I became convinced by what I then saw and have been able to learn since that the Kaiser, like the Austrian emperor, divides and rules.

Most of us Americans have known only the quietly plodding, unexcitable German who has made his home in our country. Few of us, before the war, could have imagined a German getting excited over anything. And yet Ger-

many has been stirred from end to end for a year or two at a time by things which would never get on the front page of our newspapers. Take, for example, the "Babel-Bibel" controversy.

On January 13, 1902, Professor Friedrich Delitzsch, the eminent Assyriologist of the University of Berlin, delivered a lecture before the members of the German Oriental Society in the presence of the Kaiser and members of the court. At the Kaiser's request the lecture was repeated on February 1, following, in the royal palace. The lecture set forth the close relationship between the results of cuneiform research and the Bible, and was fittingly called "Babel und Bibel," that is "Babel (Babylonia), the interpreter and illustrator of the Bible." No doubt Delitzsch overstated the Babylonian side of the case, but the discussion would have remained an academic contest had not a second lecture followed about a year after the first. The Kaiser was again present. With this lecture the real storm broke forth.

Professor Delitzsch told his audience that he avoided using the word "corroboration," for "the Old Testament would be badly served as a source of ancient history if it needed corroboration at every turn by the cuneiform monuments." In speaking of the difficulties which Assyriology has with many newly discovered texts "full of rare words and modes of speech," he said: "One perceives in this how fatal a mistake it has been for modern exegesis to quibble about such rare words and difficult passages [in the Old Testament], to 'emend' them and only too often to substitute platitudes." Orthodoxy

would have showered blessings upon the professor's head but for the following:

Revelation indeed! A greater mistake on the part of the human mind can hardly be conceived than this, that for long centuries the priceless remains of the old Hebrew literature collected in the Old Testament were regarded collectively as a religious canon, a revealed book of religion, in spite of the fact that it includes such literature as the Book of Job, which with words that in places border on blasphemy casts doubt on the very existence of a just God, together with absolutely secular productions such as wedding songs (the so-called Song of Solomon). . . . To be quite frank, beyond the revelation of God that we, each one of us, carry in our own conscience, we have certainly not deserved a further personal divine revelation.

In a little over a year a hundred thousand copies of these lectures were spread over Germany, while more than eighty pamphlets of considerable size had appeared, together with countless magazine and newspaper articles. "Babel-Bibel" was on the tongue of everybody. The church became alarmed and preachers answered Delitzsch from the pulpit or in the church papers. In the summer of 1905 my Social Democrat friend was still reading this literature, while at the "pension" Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* had to be content with running a close second as the dinner-table topic of conversation. One of the comic newspapers protested at the advertising Berlin was receiving through "Babel-Bibel-Bebel."

The Kaiser thought it necessary to take part in the discussion. He wrote a letter to the president of the Oriental Society—a letter intended for publica-

tion, as the postscript showed. "You may make the utmost use of these lines. Let all who are interested read." A few quotations may be of interest.

He approached the subject of revelation in a polemical tone, more or less denying it or reducing it to a matter of purely human development. That was a grave error, for thereby he touched on the innermost, holiest possession of many of his hearers.

The Kaiser then goes on to distinguish between two different kinds of revelation—one progressive, and, as it were, historical; the other purely religious, as preparing the way for the future Messiah. . . . In order to lead the race forward and develop it, God reveals himself in this or that great sage, whether priest or king, whether among the heathen, the Jews, or the Christians. Hammurabi was one. So were Moses, Abraham, Homer, Charlemagne, Luther, Shakespeare, Goethe, Kant, and Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse. . . . The second form of revelation is that in Israel, leading up to Christ.

Professor Harnack, a colleague of Professor Delitzsch and a close personal friend of the Kaiser, felt called upon to pour oil on the troubled waters. He says the Kaiser was really compelled to call attention to the fact that he and Professor Delitzsch were not of the same opinion on points theological. From the point of view of scholars there was indeed no controversy. It had long been recognized by these that a portion of the myths and legends of the Old Testament as well as some important elements of the Israelite civilization had their origin in Babylonia. It was equally beyond question that this fact is fatal to the current notion of inspiration. But the knowledge had not

become common property. The theologians were not to blame for this. "But church and school have been in league to suppress this knowledge by excluding it from their domain." But Professor Delitzsch was hardly discreet in his choice of terms. As a result "today it is the talk of the streets that the Old Testament does not amount to much."

For the benefit of those who think the higher criticism is rampant in Germany, let me give an extract from a series of "Babel-Bibel" sermons preached by a pastor to his flock and published "by request." I give a free translation.

Since God created man after he had created everything else, the account of the creation could come only from God himself. He might have revealed this to man at some later time, but this is unlikely. Undoubtedly Adam asked God whence he came—even little children ask such questions [according to the catechism], and God then instructed Adam as far as was necessary. As to the preservation of the record: The Flood occurred about one thousand five hundred years after the creation. Now Adam lived to be almost a thousand years old and Noah was born six hundred years before the flood. Although Holy Writ does not mention the fact, undoubtedly Noah knew Adam and had ample opportunity to become acquainted with the facts of the creation.

Then follows a plea for a more childlike faith.

The results of the scientific study of the Bible have been made accessible to the average reader in Germany through numerous popular volumes. But these results are not incorporated

into the religious instruction which is part of the common-school education of Germany. German school children, whether they are Catholics, Evangelicals, or Jews, receive religious instruction daily, but this instruction is as orthodox in the Evangelical as in the Catholic and Jewish classes. Besides, for every "radical" professor on the faculty of a German university there is a conservative. This is a well-known fact. And, again, you may go to hear a university professor of the radical type preach at some big city church and you would never suspect from the sermon that a radical thought had ever passed through his mind. To quote Harnack's words: "Church and school have been in league to suppress this [kind of] knowledge by excluding it from their domain." But how can a radical like Harnack continue to bask in the sunshine of the Kaiser's favor? Perhaps the Jatho and Traub cases will answer this question—and a few others.

In 1909 the new Prussian heresy law was passed (see Gates in the *American Journal of Theology*, XVI [1902], 241 f., and XVII [1903], 89 f.). Through these enactments, according to Professor Harnack, "the church of Prussia has broken with the custom of treating doctrinal error as deserving of punishment." The heretic was no longer to be treated as a criminal, but was to be removed from his position with or without a pension.

The removal of the popular pastor Jatho under this law led to a violent discussion in Germany. Protests were made on all sides. One was drawn up by three professors and signed by the laity of the church. Part of the protest

runs as follows (I quote from Dr. Gates's translation):

Concerning the theology of Pastor Jatho we pass no judgment. What concerns us as German Protestants is the question whether the new law of doctrinal discipline shall find application or not. We hold this doctrinal discipline in the Protestant church of the present as impossible, and every attempt at its application a shock to the ecclesiastical organization of Protestantism.

Note Professor Harnack's defense of the law:

Since the Prussian church is not fundamentally a national church, and does not include all citizens, but only those who confess a certain creed; therefore, its existence depends upon the maintenance of a creed. It owes itself the duty of protecting its creed. This task has been assigned to the Judicial Council. "But because a thing completely unprotected and at variance is worthless, therefore the protest against the Judicial Council is a mistake. To defend freedom and endanger existence is not good policy."

Germans need freedom, but it must not come at the risk of endangering the existence of the "machine."

Fuel was added to the flames when the Council took up proceedings against Pastor Traub, a friend of Jatho and his attorney before the Council. Traub's misdemeanors are summed up in a long list of attacks upon Consistories, Synods, Supreme Consistories, Royal Consistories, etc. He was dismissed without pension. Harnack again backed up the "machine." He believed that Traub was too severely punished, but "he was guilty of a serious breach of discipline and had continually overstepped the conceded rights of serious and candid

criticism." Harnack is not a conservative. He goes on to say:

Dare we treat any ancient confession of faith, with its numberless and untenable hypotheses as the Catholic church treats its "tradition"? Are we not the moment we do this already Catholic? Are we not doing it now? This is the ecclesiastical crisis of the present.

Harnack straddles the fence. Of the liberal party he says:

We sympathize strongly and warmly with them and for them, and we sympathize most deeply with Traub, and feel ourselves smitten with him.

But

for the exceedingly difficult position of the highest ecclesiastical authorities I have a strong and warm sympathy and feel it my duty to support them to the extent of my powers in the administration of the ecclesiastical ordinances.

Here lies the great difficulty. Men like Harnack, most educated Germans, in fact, know that more freedom in religion and politics is needed in Germany, but it never seems to have occurred to them that the way to get this freedom is by breaking down the governmental machine which stands in the way. Of course, we must remember that that machine has made modern Germany. That machine has united a host of petty states into an empire. But it rules the empire largely through keeping it divided. Only the lines of division have been drawn in different places. Germany has its higher critics, but they hold their university positions *because they support the machine*. The results of scientific study of the Bible are popularized in Germany, but religious

instruction in the public schools and the preaching from the pulpits is orthodox. If it is not, there are the new heresy laws. Germans discuss politics freely, loudly, and continuously, but they know when to stop. If they forget themselves, there is the helmet.

The Kaiser has promised Germany the world. But we ask what would this profit Germany, seeing that she has lost her soul. The Kaiser has told the Germans that they are the salt of the earth, and the Germans have been ready to believe it. But what if the salt have lost its savor? Millions of Germans know that they are not free, but they

have not had the stamina to draw up their Magna Charta. Millions of Germans have known that militarism was bringing them to the verge of bankruptcy, but they have been hoping that some day it would pay its own bills. Indemnity talk is still the chief ingredient of the soothing syrups administered to a restlessly interrogative Germany. I fear Germany is going to have a headache when she wakes up. And, finally, I wonder whether the professors who did not think it good policy to gain freedom at the expense of existence will ever come to understand our inability to understand their attitude.

GOD AND THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

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While we may be too near the event intelligently to estimate the significance of the revolt of the Russian people it is apparent that, whatever reactions or checks it may suffer, the course of history in Russia has been turned into new channels. Nothing comparable to it has appeared in the world since the French Revolution of the closing years of the eighteenth century. Indeed this is more radical still, for while the French Revolution was an uprising of the bourgeoisie, the Russian revolution tapped a lower stratum and is an outbreak of the proletariat.

Yet the social ferment in Russia is only the most aggravated symptom of an

infection that extends throughout the world. Just as, if modern medicine is correct in its conception of the possibility of the transmutation of bacilli, various disorders, bearing different names and of a quite dissimilar behavior, may be forms of the same infection, so the various expressions of social unrest and discontent which we see among every European people spring from the same cause. No land is immune. Austria is on the verge of revolt. Even the German people, disciplined as they are from childhood in the repression of popular feeling and almost devoid of all spontaneity and power of initiative, are showing signs, not forever to be restrained, of approaching